DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 385 362 PS 023 418

AUTHOR Tarsi, Nancy L.; And Others
TITLE "We Want More!": Empowered Parents Speak about Their Involvement in COGNET Schools.
PUB DATE Nov 94
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association (Nashville, TN, November 7-10, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; Parent Attitudes; Parent Influence; *Parent Participation; Parent School Relationship; Parent Student Relationship; Parent Teacher Cooperation; Volunteers
IDENTIFIERS *Cognitive Enrichment Network; Parent Empowerment

ABSTRACT

The Cognitive Enrichment Network (COGNET) is an educational model that operates as one of 12 sponsor sites in affiliation with the National Follow Through Project. This study assessed the life experiences of parents participating in COGNET school activities, and the impact of that involvement on children, the parents themselves, and the community. Twenty-three parents who were participants at 3 COGNET school sites were interviewed 4 times in 3 school sites; after each interview, participants were asked to attend focus group meetings to discuss topics introduced in the individual sessions. The findings offer five primary themes which are specific to the COGNET program and four secondary themes which reflected community orientation. The primary themes are as follows: (1) parents want more opportunities for participation; (2) parents engage in self improvement while involved with their COGNET school; (3) participating parents' dreams for their children reflect mainstream values; (4) the COGNET model is good for the children; (5) creative ideas were generated by participating parents, who have strong feelings about improving their parent programs. Secondary themes were: (1) parents had varied reactions to their introduction to COGNET; (2) children enjoy seeing their parents and other adults from the community in their schools; (3) parents perceive that COGNET training for teachers is related to teacher attitudes with regard to their welcoming parents into their classroom; and (4) relationships among parents were a reason for parent participation in COGNET schools or an outgrowth of the parent involvement program. (The parent involvement interview guide and list of unifying themes on parents' commitment to participation in school activities are attached.) (AP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 385 362

"We Want More!": Empowered Parents Speak About Their Involvement in COGNET Schools

As part of a symposium

Nancy L. Tarsi, M. Ed.
The University of Tennessee
420 Claxton Addition
Knoxville, Tennessee 37996-3400

with

Katherine Greenberg
Rosa Kennedy
University of Tennessee Knoxville
and Cynthia Gettys
University of Tennessee Chattanooga

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Nancy L. Tarsi
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of
the Mid-South Educational Research Association
Nashville, Tennessee
November 7-10, 1994

PS 023 418

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Introduction

Rationale for the Study

The Cognitive Enrichment Network (COGNET) is an educational model that operates as one of 12 sponsor sites in affiliation with the National Follow Through Project, funded in part by the U.S. Department of Education. A full discussion of the COGNET Model is available through referencing the bibliography. Research is conducted on an ongoing basis, and I was hired to implement a design that would capture some of the experiences of parents who were participating in COGNET schools. This research was mandated in the original grant, reflecting varied positive effects reported in the literature with regard to parent participation in schools (Becker, 1984).

In considering the design, I considered that quantitative data is felt to capture only part of the parent involvement phenomenon since "hard data" less readily portrays parent satisfaction or community effects (Zigler and Syfco, 1993). Qualitative research procedures are characterized by the practice of empiricism that is sensitive to individual perspectives of reality (Traudt, 1981). In contrast, the positivistic orientation dictates that scientific method results in objective, reproducible data which can then be formalized in quantitative analysis. In the broad context of research strategies, qualitative is identified as the preferred form for understanding human affairs.

With regard to the task at hand, it was my decision to proceed using methods that offered access to the life-worlds of the participating parents.

Methods

The qualitative research interview is the primary method of investigation employed in the study, the purpose to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the phenomenon (Kvale, 1976). Several characteristics of qualitative inquiry recommend it's use with the population described given their sociocultural position outside of mainstream America. Since the principal investigator is outside of the life-world of the participants, employing non-directive techniques in dialoguing orchestrates an unfolding of the participant's framework for later analysis and increased understanding on the part of the researcher. The open-ended qualitative interview reveals new ways of seeing than has been managed through use of closed questionnaires and other methods from the quantitative tradition (McCracken, 1988).

The richness and profundity of human reality is seen as closely related to the structures and meanings of natural language (Valle & Halling, 1989). Selection of the interview as the primary method for use in the study was the clear choice considering that limited access to the parents precluded the most naturalistic setting available in research methodolgy; that of participant observation. The qualitative research interview is based on meaning. A philosophy of science which denies or denigrates interpersonal interaction and subjectivity in research can hardly contribute to increased understanding

through the interview method, whose very essence is interpersonal interaction and subjective interpretation (Kvale, 1976).

Use of the word "subjective" is popularly seen as reflecting a divergence from scientific method, which values reliability in the reproducability of results. Since no two persons experience is identical, qualitative researchers postulate that validity is a more worthwhile measurement; the accurate capturing of the meaning of each participant's experience. The use of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) requires that interpretation of the data is derived from participant's words. Their statements are taken from the interview protocol and validate any pattern identified. The discovery of theory from data that is systematically obtained and analyzed in social research places a high value on the validity of findings.

A second method employed in the project is use of the focus group. Focus groups are recommended for use in social research under certain conditions. When there is a power differential between participants and decisions makers, when there exists a gap between professionals and their target audiences, and when investigating complex behaviors and motivations the focus group is recognized as a preferred research method. They are also used when a degree of consensus needs to be ascertained on a topic and when a friendly research method is needed that is respectful and not condescending to the target audience (Morgan, 1993). This criteria clearly applies to the population and the research question put forth in this study.

In educational research, focus groups are composed of a facilitator/researcher and the participants in the study. Focus groups can function as the sole method of analysis or as in this study, a follow-up to individual interviews. A fundamental observation derived from field studies is that group characteristics affect the nature and the quality of the data collected (McCracken, 1988). The plan to follow up individual interviews with focus groups from each school was felt to cross-reference findings. Themes from individual sessions were shared with group members to stimulate conversation and elicit feedback on the validity of the themes revealed. Participant feedback resulted in parent elaboration, clarification and the opportunity for correction with regard to the interpretation of the data. The participant's feedback is integral to the research design; had any participant disagreed with an interpretation that was grounded in the data, the researcher would have included that information in the data analysis. No participant gave feedback to this effect, despite the numerous opportunities provided to correct or elaborate.

The development of an interview guide provided a broad structure to our conversations and ensured that each parent was introduced to similar issues concerning their personal experiences in their children's schools. Generated out of the pilot study, the interview guide represented a level of knowledge that was held by the researcher with regard to COGNET school structures, their training requirements, the broad community design inherent in the instructional model, etc.

Site and Sample

The terms "site and sample" reflects the positivistic philosophy wherein the world is seen as a "componential, externally verifiable universe that exists apart from our

perception of it. Rather, this inquiry process from an alternate paradigm, constructivism, which argues that "knowledge is symbolically constructed" and not objective. That in fact our understandings are based on conventions, on perceptions held in community with others (Hatch, 1994 in press). Interest and activity directed both the site and population researched.

Parent involvement is an integral component of the COGNET program, which is operating in year three of a five year grant. Since its introduction to the schools, parent programs have developed differently reflecting the culture of the community. Cumulatively, twenty-three parents were interviewed over a four month period in which three school sites were included. The three schools involved were chosen on the basis of availability as well as their enthusiasm to participate. Ultimately research on parent involvement in COGNET schools will include individual interviews followed by focus groups.

A pilot study informed the present one and consisted of ten interviews at two sites. This practice was extremely useful in increasing researcher familiarity with common school practice and in discerning issues that were figural to the parents. Most significantly, I became highly sensitized to the importance of communicating effectively with the participant parents. Language proved to be an unexpected barrier in the pilot, and this insight led to improvement in communication style in future interviews. At each of the three schools a room was set aside for interviews. Thirteen interviews were conducted at school #1 over a three day period, four interviews were conducted with school #2 in one afternoon and six interviews were held with parents at school #3 over a two day period (see Interview Guide, Table A). Altogether three males and nineteen females participated in the interview experience. The sessions ranged in length from 20 to 70 minutes. They were audiotaped
and later transcribed for analysis.

After each interview, participants were invited to attend a group meeting where they could speak with other parents from their school to further discuss topics introduced in the individual sessions. The school with the largest number of interviewees was chosen for the first focus group conducted. One month after their indepth interviews nine participating parents, myself and the COGNET Support Teacher met for our group session.

I facilitated a discussion of ideas that the parent/participants represented in their interviews. Common patterns had been coded and highlighted for discussion. I began with those ideas shared by mostly all participants (11-13) and ended with several themes that were represented in some of the interviews (5 or more). Thematic structure is often described in using the terms "primary and secondary" to represent the categories reported above.

The parents were invited to consider the themes carefully. Critical to the design, the participants were strongly encouraged to correct any interpretation that was even slightly different from their memory of what they had communicated. The focus group was also audiotaped and transcribed for analysis.

Data Analysis

Bogden (1988) describes data analysis as the process of arranging interview transcripts, field notes and other materials you acquire while involved in a study. Working with the interview and focus group data involved my reviewing the protocol's repeatedly, noting patterns and topics and developing coding categories. In this project, the themes came to the fore as a taxonomy, or a set of categories organized around a simple relationship yet with interrelationships occurring among the categories within the cultural domain. Spradley's (1980) model of a taxonomic analysis provides the framework in which the visual mode of diagramming reveals interpretation of the content, with elaboration of themes and parent citations (see Thematic VisualGraphic, Table B). In the following pages, parent voices will be offered after which I will offer interpretation and
synthasis of the data.

Emergent Themes

Parent Voices

The unifying experience of the participants was that of voluntary involvement in COGNET schools. Represented graphically on Table B, primary themes are those identified in 11- 13 interviews conducted in the large study. Secondary themes are found in 5 or more of the parent interviews.

Primary Themes

Theme #1: Parents want more.

Perry: I believe it is really up to the parents to really start getting together and trying to think of ways to attract more parents...I believe you guys are doing a good job. A great job. But it is up to us as parents to get together and generate more parents.

LaFrieda: Well, I didn't think I got the right amount. The information that they gave me made me want to know more...they would give you a certain amount and then they go to something else...I guess it was because of the time frame that they had to work in.

Emma: I know that COGNET just goes through K-3, if it could go all the way up to 5th grade, that would help those 5th graders, too. Just stopping at 3 you still need more learning because right then they are just beginning to learn.
And: We could've got more information. We did get a lot for those three days but we could've got more, because a lot of the parents don't know that much, living in the area that we live in. It helps a lot.

Andrea: That computer put a lot of heart in the kids...some of these kids in the projects, they don't know nothing about no computer, and then when they start taking computer up here it kind of change them. They think no more violence and trouble. They focus. They use their brain to focus on these computers. They need more computers in this school, really, they need a lot more than just one for each classroom. They need like 2

or 3...you see some of the kids down from the projects...these kids they are wild. When they get in that computer room it seems like their mind change.

Beverly: I wish it was longer, because the 3 days wasn't really long enough. Not for me, not as far as for me it wasn't. I wish it could be more often and longer.

Group: Although you have a sheet with the Building Blocks and the Learning Tools on it... it is still not enough. I mean 6 hours...it is really not enough to really go through and just even role play in a parent meeting, where you can use them with each other. I have said this over and over-you need an ongoing activity for parents to do the same thing the teachers are doing. Just like they work twice a month then the parents should be doing it- if it was really going to work.

Theme #2: Parents engage in self improvement while involved with their COGNET school.

Debbie: I learned a whole lot. It really helped me. It built up my self-esteem.

Darbara: Well, I took the medical assistant training so that is one training that I didn't have so I feel like,...it just put me more like I could see a professional position where I can go out and do something. I don't have to just fall back and say "I will just get food stamps and welfare." I can do something, you know, for myself.

Charlotte: I learned about getting a job. So that way, I got a job, you know...I like volunteering, but it is just like I wasn't contributing to nothing. My family-wise. I work at a
nursing home and I get to talk to elderly people and help them, you know.

Marsha: I got licensed for day care in my home...I mean, you went through the classes and we did them.

Beverly: Seven weeks ago I started into school. I am taking data processing...

Charles: Well, I started back to college over the summer, am taking courses I need for certification.

Theme #3: Participating parents dreams for their children reflect mainstream values.

Debbie: Well, I want them to graduate. I want them to get a good education, because that is something I did not get. I quit in the 11th grade...but now I regret that...I done it. I want them to get a good education and a good job or career, what they need.

Aura: I just want him to do good. By growing up, going to school, finishing school. Getting a good job.

Shirley: I am hoping that they grasp this technology...that is coming in now, because that is what it is about. And they got to have their education...And that is what I want for mine. To be able to take care of themselves.

Andrea: I want them to succeed in life. I want them to choose what they want to be. I just want whatever they do to succeed.

Julie: I would love for them to grow up in a place where they wouldn't have to worry about getting hurt, getting killed. I don't want therm to have to worry about if they walk out of the
house-who is going to take them, or who is going to end up shooting them.

Perry: Just keep learning. Have respect for peoples. Respect their own selves...and just be whatever they want to be and...try to be the best. Whatever they want to be even if it is a janitorial job, be the best or try to be the best at it. President of a company or the U.S. as far as that goes.

Theme #4: COGNET is good for the children. While parents relate hearing their children use COGNET terminology in the home, all but two parents indicated they did not use the labels themselves which further substantiates their forceful urging for more training verbalized in the first theme.

Shirley: It seems like...after coming through the workshop program everything changes. The atmosphere of the school, the teachers, everything changes. It was different. It was, I don't know, it was like everybody could get along...you know, we were able to work together.

Eloise: I believe that this program can help the parent relate to the children and the children and all the teachers that put them people together. And it would bring out something that way the parents could get use to them...I believe that with this program and more of them coming in they will realize that it is altogether...takes all three...it takes all of you.

Gay: I think it is a good program because it gives the kids a lot of incentives that they would not have otherwise.

Melody: Because of constant change...the only way they are going to be able to adapt-they going to have to adjust with the changes. And they have to know the ways, the routes
to take and keep up with the change...

Kathy: they are learning to...connect events like when something they are trying to learn they can remember that they learned it before, you know, they can learn it again...my first grader said, "Mama, I am self-regulating. I am not bothering anybody." I just said, "Well!" I was thrilled from it but I was kind of shocked and I wasn't really believing it,

you know.

Marsha: I am trying to think of all the Building Blocks that they have, but...one thing I haven't done is...learned it in the COGNET terms.

Perry: And the difference between these kids now that this program came in and when they started...it is just amazing. They learning...they think proud, too. I believe this program is setting the foundation for them to go and to be...you just can't beat it as far as I'm concerned...they get them shots, and ... necessary stuff...that got to be done. This program is getting it done in my judgement. Thank God for it.

Theme #5: Creative ideas were generated by participating parents, who have strong feelings about improving their parent programs.

La Frieda: Advertise it. Put it on the radio...a lot of...young adults could have benefitted from (that program offered last Spring.) Put it on the radio. They don't read the paper that much.

Emma:...every parent volunteer, for every day that they volunteer, the child's name will go into a drawing.

Andrea: The majority of these people takes these checks they get from Cognet and spend
on the kids what they could not afford because they don't have a husband. Yeah, I think they need to give them a little more...and stop waiting on..."well you come to class this time, I give you $25.00". That is not right.

Darbara: Well. I noticed that they don't have too much...fund- raising, you know...a flea market or selling candy or something you could actually get the parents involved with coming to the school raising money for the school.

Kay: You have to have incentives.

Parker: You know, a lot of single family heads of households. Well, I (have) a paramour...he spends more time with my kids than I do...he would do the cooking and cleaning while I was at school...he wants to come but they told him he couldn't because he wasn't a legal parent. They always saying about "positive black role models"...if there is a man that wants to come whe'er or not he is my neighbor...he don't have to help my child, somebody else's child...if he is really going to sit there and be serious that he wants to do this, fine. They waited until the day of the thing to call me at home...he was getting ready to go. He had bought new clothes to come with me. And you can't come because you are not a legal parent.

Group: I like this idea of where parents and teachers can come together and get this

training in more than 18 hours for teachers. The parents need the same thing- more than 18 hours.

Secondary Themes
Theme #1: There were varied reactions to their introduction to COGNET.

Kathy: It (the letter) explained what was going on in the program, and when I first heard about it, I was kind of suspicious. I was wondering, you know, why they want your kids as
guinea pigs. They said they was going to be using video taping, and we had never heard of anythng like that at school. I really couldn't understand what really it was going to do, not just from the letter...maybe if they went into more detail...and I called and talked to (COGNET Support Teacher) and she explained to me real good what it was going to be.

Shirley: The Staff here at (school) sent papers home...it was explaining how you wanted to better teach your child a new way of learning...I believe I was kind of afraid, because when they said workshop it is like, oh boy, pencil and paper. You got to come in here and learn something. But it was totally different from that.

Beverly: The first feeling I had was good..then I thought, why would they have to pay somebody to come, you know, out to express...how they feel about their child. And:
I was really scared, because I was going to be learning...I said, O.K., I am not good at taking tests and I hope they don't give any tests. That is really what I thought.

Emma: The first time I heard it was when they sent a letter home to the parents wanting us to come to a 3 day workshop and at that time I wasn't studying the workshop, the money was more interesting. But once I got into it I really enjoyed it.

Theme #2: Children enjoy seeing their parents and other adults from the community in their schools.

Shirley: There is a child...that is in my son's class...and he has kind of been a behavior problem all year...and the more I volunteered in class the more changes came over him...he was sitting in class one day and the report cards was fixing to come out and he says, "I know I am going to fail" . He says, "I 've not made the honor roll since school started. I want to make the honor roll". I said, well, if you will start listening real careful to what Mrs.(Teacher) is telling you and start doin it instead of just sitting back there doing your own thing...that is the only thing that is keeping you off the honor roll is because you
are not doing what the teacher has been telling you. A week later when the report cards came out he made honor roll for the first time (tears in her eyes). And he came running up to me and showed me his report card and gave me a hug and said, "Mama said to thank you for helping me to make the honor roll". I love thos little kids to death...lots of them have parents that don't care but I like to show them that hey, at least there is one parent that will.

Charlotte: I see the gleam in his eyes when he sees me, and he says, "There goes Mama!". And everybody says...there is your Mom. Or Kevin, there is your Mom or Marcus, there is your Mom. It is like they really seem to want to get into they books. My daughter want to write her handwriting just perfect when I am there. My son- he kind of wants to show off at the boards. "Mama, I did this! Mrs. (Teacher) I did this!"...I can see that it makes a difference when I am here.

Betty: Oh, they love it, they love it...They well-behaved, you know...they want me to come, "Mama, are you coming to school today?" Or, "You are not coming to school?" When they see me here they are glad to see me.

Theme #3: Parents perceive that COGNET training for teachers is related to teacher attitudes with regard to their welcoming parents into their classrooms.

Group Member: Some of them don't care enough about teaching or instruction about the Blocks and the kids are like, what is she talking about? She should make it more simple for the kids...so I figure if you have some kind of parent-teacher training...

Member #2: Why couldn't it be mandatory?

Member #3:...one of the problems is that this program has been going on now for the third year and into the fourth year and we have new teachers continuously coming and they have missed out on the formal training of the Building Blocks and Tools. And when they come in
the first year they are very hesitant and more than ever afraid to use them, because they don't really understand them.

Member #4"...then we really need parents and teachers coming together so teachers won't feel intimidated when they see parents coming in, and they do, some of them become a little hesitant and a little afraid, because they are wondering, what is this parent coming for? Is she really coming to help me or is she coming to inform on me?

Theme #4: Parent to parent relationships are a reason for parent attendance to COGNET schools and/or an outgrowth of the parent involvement program.

Aura:...(when asked why she decided to come) they said it was parent to parent.

Eloise: this COGNET program is like...you relate to another parent. And talk with them and spread it through, you know, your neighborhood. You say, "come on, go up here, and see this here" . You know if you have time or something. You know your neighbors more than you do your friends...I think of the parents, they are doing good but it still need more parents involved and maybe one parent to the other parent. Other one can talk to the other parent. And just spread the word.

Discussion and Synthesis of the Data

With the exception of the themes that were specific to COGNET operations in individual schools, every theme derived from the data collected in parent interviews is reflected in and further supports contemporary research findings on the impact of parent involvement in schools on children, parents themselves and to the community. Additionally, these findings are consistent with the current state of knowledge about improving children's cognitive development through intervention programs that train parents to engage or expand practices with their children (Becker, 1984). The themes that are specific to the COGNET program are reflected in an expanded version of this paper, available upon request.

The secondary themes reflected community orientation most strongly. Respect and understanding of the culture that presupposes a certain manner of treatment expected from school personnel and parent to parent relationships were voiced as figural. It would appear that the secondary themes are consistent with those coming to the fore in the international community. The emphasis on collaboration and cooperation is being felt on a political, economic and sociocultural level not witnessed before in the history of the world. It is exciting to notice it's reflection in the educational discipline.

The dynamics of the focus group is another matter for discussion. Interestingly, the manner of all participants was increasingly animated throughout the group session. Despite the fact that all five primary themes and four secondary themes were put out for reaction, the group members spoke out on several points, elaborating fully on them and saying little in reference to the others that were introduced, other than voicing acquiescence for the interpretation drawn from their words. There was sometimes a return to a popular point when a parent had something additional to report.

Most of the group discourse centered on the need and rationale for generating more parent involvement in COGNET's schools. In addition to their children's academic and behavioral improvement, parents cited improvement in the school atmosphere and community cooperation as expected outgrowth. They offered some additional self-improvement projects taken on while they were involved in COGNET schools. Equally central to the discussion was the discussion of the necessity to offer parents more training in the use of the tools and the Blocks. Several joined in agreement when the suggesstion of training that was equal to the teacher's training was voiced. Group assent followed the mention of joint training sessions for parents and teachers to attend together.

Two other points were prominent in the discussion, though were not elaborated as fully as the above. One involved the parent's observation of cooperative learning strategies being used in the classrooms. They voiced support for this, saying that it would prepare the children for "the work life". Last, talk of teacher's acceptance of parents in the classsrooms was introduced. There were questions as to the causes and there was general agreement when one postulated that the teachers might be worried about their use of the Tools and Blocks. An audience could intimidate them. This last point led to another mention of the parents and teachers taking training together in the future. This topic was mentioned in the individual protocol's but was not reflected as primary or secondary. Teacher acceptence of the parents in the classrooms was focal as

the last group discussion in which they engaged. It is my sense that this last point was a risk for parents to voice, notwithstanding my statement about wanting all their thoughts, since improving COGNET's functioning in the schools is the overwhelming goal. I think that together they had more courage to broach in a group what might have been more difficult to initiate in an individual session.

Recommendations For Further Study

There are many different stories that are contained within this research. Since the project was broadly framed to highlight the most pervasive patterns, some stories were not mined fully. My sense is that there is a great deal more to investigate around the issue of teacher attitudes and their relationship to parent involvement in the schools. Relatedly, what may be interpreted as resistance to parent adoption of the COGNET language was reflected in several of the protocols. Further attention to the possibility should be addressed in future projects. An example follows;

> Parker: I am in the neighborhood and some people say, "Your child needs to Approach the Task, and get to the Main Idea." My neighbor say," Fool, if you don't shut up..."...I practice them but I don't use the terms. She (daughter) use them all the time...she will do all this and tell you what it is, cute little subheading, and I tell her, "Well, darling, it is not what you say it is how you say it...As long as I am doing it that is all I care about. As long as I'm doing it right.

We must focus on this issue for 2 reasons. If adoption of the formal COGNET language is necessary for internalizing the concepts or for "practice" until they are natural, this needs to be more effectively communicated to the parents so that justification is provided for their increased effort. Second, on the basis of the data collected thus far, we cannot interpret that there is resistence to adoption of the language. Rather, citations in two interview protocols can be interpreted as parent perception of outsider reaction to their use of the COGNET language. Study that focuses on this specific question should be initiated, mindful of the complex dynamics that characterized a culture. In retrospect, I did not question the participants fully enough in the interview session; only when reviewing the transcripts did the participant's written words evoke further inquiry. Perhaps parent to parent training under supervision is an option for consideration. Consider the following quotes from a parent who is clearly conversant with the Tools and Blocks.

> Group: those children can learn...by what we talk about Selective Attention, Approach to Task...so now when the child goes home to tell...and the parents are not versed in the Building Blocks, this child starts talking about that- sure you are proud of them, but, so when you turn around and say, " Oh, so you used Comparing Behavior and you use Approach to Task...then that child knows Mom is paying attention. Mom knows what I am talking about. So it is that type of thing where it is so good when the parents can become involved to the point where they can use the same language as the child.

COGNET's philosophic underpinning in the theory of mediated learning (Feuerstein, 1991) reveals it's position with regard to the mediation of information from parent to child. The cultural aspects that characterize the home and school environments as they relate to the child's learning is an area that has not been adequately studied. Increasing use of case study and ethnographic methods of research in COGNET schools should provide different kinds of information about the effects of implementation. With reference to this study, there is a paucity of material that show the effect of parent involvement on student learning (Cattermole and Robinson, 1985). With an increasing focus on community models of learning in educational discipline, my recommendation is that investigation in which triangulation of methods of analysis continues.

A thorough reporting of the creative and dynamic suggestions the parents generated is mandated. Our movement to acknowledge their contributions will serve to validate their efforts and support the empowerment illustrated in the parent interviews. In addition, it is important for COGNET to make a statement of purpose with regard to the suggestions garnered. We are collaborating in action research; consistent with good research design the feedback of the participants should evoke response.

Vertical diffusion is another concept that bears study. In this specific study, vertical diffusion would manifest as the phenomenon in which children who did not attend a Follow Through school program would nonetheless be affected by their sibling's attendance to a Follow Through school. Effect would be measured by achievement scores taken before and after the non-attending child's exposure to the attending sibling. In a study conducted in southern Florida, a statistically insignificant yet impressive gain in scores was noted in children who fit the subject description.

In closing, the following quote from our Focus Group reflects the powerful comunity of learners that are coalescing around our COGNET schools:

> Group: It is wonderful when you continue to learn. You never get too old to learn and that is the thing that some of us have this program, that if you don't finish high school and you don't finish college then you can't learn anything. You can learn *everything* and there are so many programs...all we have to do is find people to take the opportunity to do it. That is what it is all about.

Bibliography

Books

Apprenticeship in Thinking, Rogoff, 1990.
Existential-Phenomenological Perspectives in Psychology, Valle & Halling, 1989.
Head Start and Beyond, Zigler & Styfco, 1993.
Dropouts, Kronick and Hargis, 1990.
The Long Interview, McCracken, 1988.
Participant Observation, Spradley, 1980.
Emotion and Fieldwork, Kleinman & Copp, 1993.
Qualitative Research in Early Education Settings, Hatch, 1994 (in press).
Grounded Theory, Glaser and Strauss, 1969.
Symbolic Interactionism, Blumer, 1967.
The Collected Works of L.S., Vygotsky, 1987.
Mediated Learning, Feuerstein, 1991.
Sucessful Focus Groups, Morgan, 1993.
Don't Accept Me As I Am, Feuerstein et al., 1988.

Articles

Competent Parents, Complex Lives, Rosier and Corsaro, 1993.
Parent Involvement in High Schools, Brian, 1994.
Instructional Approaches to Qualitative Research, Traudt, 1981.
Parent Involvement: A Review of Research and Principles of Successful Practice, Becker, 1984.
Parent Participation in the Schools, Comer, 1986.
Parental Beliefs and Values Related to Family Risk, Educational Intervention and Child Academic Competence, Campbell et al., 1989.
Schools Reaching Out, Davies, 1991.
Effective Home/School Communication-From the Parents Perspective, Cattermole & Robinson, 1985.
Some Effects of Parent Involvement in Schools, Herman & Yeh, 1983.1990.
How Has Follow Through Promoted Parent Involvement? Gordon et al, 1979.
Parent Involvement in Elementary Education: Suggestions and Findings From the Follow Through Program, Olmsted, 1991.
Linking Parent Behaviors to Child Achievement: Four Evaluation Studies From the Parent Education Follow Through Program, Olmsted & Rubin, 1983.
Parent Involvement- What Research Says to Administrators, Epstein, 1987.
The Qualitative Research Interview, Kvale, 1976.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Talk about how many Cognet workshops you have attended, where, when, how long were they (1-3 days).

How did you first hear about Cognet (letter, a parent, friend, teacher, your child,...) Think back to the very first thing you thought when you first heard about it? Your first impression of what it was...

What do you remember about the first day you went to a Cognet workshop? What did you think, what did you do? (elicit elaboration)

Tell me about your relationship with the teachers at the school. (also, the other parents at the school) Does it matter to your child that you volunteer at the school? How can you tell? Is there anything your child says or does, any way that you know that it matters to them that you are there?

In the time that you've been active in the Cognet program (use figure the parent cited in question 1), has you involvement with the school changed? Have you become more/the same/less involved in your child's school?

What would you like for your children in the future? Does school and or Cognet play a role in that?

In the past ___ years (use the time frame of their involvement with Cognet) have you done any self-improvement? Gone to school, gotten a promotion, done volunteer work, etc?

What do you think of the parent involvement program in your school? Would you like any changes? Tell me about them.

UNIFYING THEME: Parent's Commitment to Visible, Ongoing Participation in School Activities

PRIMARY THEMES

#1: PARENTS WANT MORE; training in COGNET language and skill building, classroom activities, administrative activities (budgeting, fund raising), curricular purchases, etc.

#2: PARENTS ENGAGE IN SELF-IMPROVEMENT: going back to school or beginning compensatory educational programs, job training, enhanced self- esteem, etc.

#3: PARENTS DREAMS FOR THEIR CHILDREN REFLECT MAINSTREAM VALUES: in contrast to early research citing a "culture of poverty" that spawned different values from those developed within the mainstream population.

#4: COGNET IS GOOD FOR THE CHILDREN: there is a positive difference in the school atmosphere and in how parent's, teacher's and children are working together. This shared group experience includes THE PARENTS VERBALIZED NON-USE OF COGNET LANGUAGE that they hear their children engaging in at home.

#5: CREATIVE AND VARIED SUGGESTIONS WERE GENERATED: improvement suggestions focused on the need for more training (possibly joint teacher/parent sessions), increasing the parents who become involved with the schools, changing some training materials to make them more accessible for new parent volunteers, adapting a more culturally sensitive system by which to allow adults from the community in to learn the tools and blocks that affect cognitive modifiablity, etc.

SECONDARY THEMES

#1: The parent's had varied reactions when they were first introduced to COGNET (anxious, confused, interested, afraid, etc.).

#2: Children enjoy seeing their parents and other adults from their community in their schools.

#3: Parent's see teacher attitudes about parent involvement in the classroom as related to how well the teachers themselves have been trained in the COGNET instructional model.

#4: Parent to parent relationships were a source of unexpected pleasure and served to aid in parent's continued involvement in the schools.